IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a listing of the claims in the application with claim 11 shown as amended.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

Claim 4. (As Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea, an imidazole ring-containing compound or an indole ring-containing compound.

Claims 5-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution containing (a) an anionic surfactant and (b) an agent selected from the group consisting of an amphoteric surfactant, a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; and

~~(2) obtaining a treated sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and~~

~~(3)~~ (2) adding the treated sample containing treatment solution to reaction buffer and detecting the virus antigen by immunoassay using the probe monoclonal antibody.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A virus assay method, characterized by using a sample treating method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 and reacting it with a probe which specifically recognizes a virus antigen, for detection or quantization of the presence of the virus antigen.

Claims 13-33 (Cancelled)

Claim 34. (As Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 35 and 36 (Cancelled)

Claim 37. (As Previously Presented) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or a hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, and (c) an agent selected from the group consisting of a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant, wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b) and the agent (c);

(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and

(3) subjecting the sample containing treatment solution diluted with reaction buffer to an immunoassay using a the probe monoclonal antibody for detecting the viral antigens.

Claim 38. (As Previously Presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 39 and 40 (Cancelled)

41. (As Previously Presented) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, (c) a nonionic surfactant and (d) a protein denaturant; wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b), the nonionic surfactant (c) and the protein denaturant (d);

(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and

(3) subjecting the sample containing treatment solution diluted with reaction buffer to an immunoassay using a probe monoclonal antibody for detecting the viral antigen.